

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12 HA-05 /105 W

-----051950 021932Z /45

P R 021548Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1457

INFO AMEMBASSY COTONOU PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION GENEVA

USICA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 2107

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PEPR, GB, DM

SUBJECT: BENIN SITUATION: FONMIN MEETS WITH DIPLOMATS

REF: (A) LIBREVILLE 2094,(B)LIBREVILLE 2098(NOTAL),(C)LIBREVILLE
2103 (NOTAL)

1. FONMIN MARTIN BONGO CONVOKED ALL LOCAL CHIEFS OF DIPLOMATIC
MISSIONS PLUS LOCAL PRESS MORNING AUG 2 TO BRIEF US ON GABON'S
PROBLEM WITH BENIN. IN 45 MINUTE SESSION, BONGO WALKED US
THROUGH HISTORY OF PROBLEM BEGINNING WITH MERCENARY INVASION
COTONOU IN JANUARY 1977. HE COVERED TREATMENT OF DISPUTE AT
OAU CONCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING AT LOME, AFRO-ARAB CONFERENCE
AT CAIRO AND AT UN SECURITY COUNCIL, MAKING SPECIAL POINTS THAT
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NO FLIGHT FOR COTONOU COULD HAVE ORIGINATED AT FRANCEVILLE BECAUSE
(A) FRANCEVILLE WAS NOT EQUIPPED FOR NIGHT FLIGHTS (NO LIGHTING,
AND FLIGHT FROM FRANCEVILLE CARRYING MERCENARIES ALLEGEDLY
TOOK OFF IN EARLY MORNING HOURS OF JAN 16), AND (B) REGIONAL
CONTROL TOWER AT BRAZZAVILLE WOULD HAVE DETECTED IT . PRES. BONGO
IN FACT LEARNED OF INVASION WHILE IN FLIGHT FROM LAGOS TO
NOUAKCHOTT AFTER ATTENDING AFRICAN ART FESTIVAL. FONMIN ALSO

MADE POINT OF WONDERING WHY MILITARY GOVERNMENT (COTONOU)
TOOK NO MILITARY ACTION DURING INVASION, ESPECIALLY AGAINST
VULNERABLE AIRCRAFT AT COTONOU AIRPORT.

3. AFTER DESCRIBING CONFRONTATION AT KHARTOUM OAU SUMMIT,
FONMIN INSISTED REACTION OF GABONESE AGAINST BENINESE IN LIBREVILLE
WAS REACTION OF PEOPLE WHO HAD SUFFERED ENOUGH OF KEREKOU'S
ATTACKS. GOG COUNCIL OF MINISTERS THEN MET AND TOOK DECISION OF
REPATRIATION FOR PROTECTION OF BENINESE.

3. FONMIN SAID GABON HAS SUFFICIENT MEANS OF EFFECTING REPATRI-
ATION ITSELF, BUT BECAUSE KEREKOU WAS INSISTING THAT BENINESE
BE TRANSPORTED DIRECTLY TO COTONOU, GABON NEEDED HELP(HE INCLUDED
TWO SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO FRIENDLY "GREAT POWERS"). IN SEEKING
HELP, HOWEVER, GABON HAD NO INTENTION OF ACTUALLY INVOLVING
ANYONE ELSE IN THEIR PROBLEM. GABON HAD IN FACT ASKED "BROTHER
COUNTRY" TO PERMIT REPATRIATION OVERLAND TO BENIN, BUT KEREKOU'S
INSISTENCE ON DIRECT REPATRIATION RULED THIS OUT. (THIS
IS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT VERSION OF APPROACH TO TOGO WE HAVE
ALREADY REPORTED, BUT, IN FACT, KEREKOU'S RESPONSE TO GABON WAS ONLY
RECEIVED AUG 1, ACCORDING FRENCH AMBASSADOR.)

4. FONMIN RESTATED THE THREE EXCEPTIONS ALREADY REPORTED TO THOSE
BEING ASKED TO LEAVE AND REPORTED THAT PRES. BONGO HAD VISITED
BENINESE CAMP TO ASSURE THAT BENINESE WELFARE WAS ASSURED.
HE THEN CLOSED BY ASKING FOR QUESTIONS, BUT WITH PRESS IN ATTEN-
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DANCE, NO ONE TOOK UP OFFER.

5. MEANWHILE, PRESS BLACKOUT, IF IT EXISTED, WAS LIFTED MORNING
AUG 2 WITH LENGTHY FRONT PAGE ARTICLE IN LIBREVILLE DAILY L'UNION,
WHICH (A) REPORTED AGAIN DEPARTURE OF 468 BENINESE BY SEA (360
ADULTS AND 108 CHILDREN) ON JULY 31, (B) VISIT OF PRES. BONGO TO
LYCEE CAMP ON JULY 30 TO TALK WITH 5000 BENINESE TO WHOM HE
EXPLAINED FAULT LAY ONLY WITH KEREKOU, WHO PROVOKED GABONESE
PEOPLE AND WHO WAS QUOTED AS SAYING, "I HAD NOT WISHED IT.
ON CONTRARY, I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THAT EVERYTHING HAPPEN
CALMLY, BECAUSE IT WAS A POLITICAL PROBLEM THAT COULD HAVE BEEN
SETTLED BETWEEN STATES," AND (C) VISIT BY PRES. BONGO TO OWENDO
PORT TO SEE DEPARTEES THERE. ARTICLE ALSO REPORTED DEPARTURE
BY AIR OF NUMEROUS BENINESE AUG 1 AT OWN EXPENSE. THEY WERE
FREELY ALLOWED TO LEAVE LYCEE CAMP "WHICH HAS NEVER BEEN LOCKED UP
(BOUCLE) MILITARILY EVEN DURING MOMENTS OF TENSION." 250
BENINDES LEFT ABOARD UTA FLIGHT FOR LAGOS AND HALF-DOZEN MORE
LATER ON AIR AFRIQUE FLIGHT.

6. MEANWHILE, FRENCH AMBASSADOR TOLD ME THAT S/S CHRISTIAN
VIELJEUX HAD ARRIVED COTONOU AND PASSENGERS WERE PERMITTED
DISEMBARK. AS RESULT, SECOND FRENCH SHIP STANDING BY AT PORT

GENTIL (LIBREVILLE 2079) WAS NOW MOVING UP TO EMBARK ANOTHER LOAD.
HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER CHRISTIAN VIELJEUX WOULD RETURN TO LIBRE-
VILLE. TIENKEN

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